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dwell upon its dangers. I will merely repeat what a Greenland whaling skipper once said: "When you have hold of the land-ice—there you are! but when you are in the pack—where are you?"

The Smith Sound route, I maintain, is the one which offers results most worthy of this country. If the solution of the greatest geographical problem that remains to be solved, if the achievement of those discoveries in every branch of science which have been pointed out, are not considered worth the expenditure of so trifling a sum as will be required—an expenditure which would be richly and abundantly repaid—the character of the English people must be strangely altered. But, Sir, I am confident that, when the subject has received full and fair consideration, the public opinion of the country will approve the completion of North Polar discovery, and that the Government will bow to that decision. When it is remembered how beneficial are the indirect advantages invariably derived from voyages of discovery, an interest will be felt in them, even by men who do not personally appreciate their scientific results. I know this from letters that have been received from all quarters by Sherard Osborn and myself; I know it from the numerous volunteers that have come forward; I know it from the generous and cordial support which this great project has received from the whole daily and weekly press, with three exceptions. Let the result be what it may, you, Sir, and the Fellows of this Society, will have the satisfaction of feeling that you have done your best to promote a great national undertaking, which, if not done by this generation, will assuredly be achieved by the next.

I only wish that Sherard Osborn could have been here to perform a task which I have so unworthily attempted; and, Sir, I cannot conclude without expressing my deep regret that we are at this time deprived of the advice and co-operation of that greatest of all living Arctic explorers, the discoverer of the fate of Franklin—Sir Leopold McClintock.

After the reading of the papers, the PRESIDENT thus addressed the Meeting:—

"For the third time during this Session your attention has now been called to the subject of a North Polar Expedition. When this subject was first brought before you by our gallant associate, Captain Sherard Osborn, a hearty desire animated all those who took part in the discussion to foster an enterprise so calculated to advance geography and the kindred branches of science; and no one of our experienced Arctic officers doubted the possibility of the project, whether carried out by the route of Smith Sound and the west coast of Greenland, or by that of Spitzbergen, as advocated by Dr. Petermann, and previously by General Sabine. At the following Meeting we were chiefly occupied in obtaining the opinions of those experienced navigators as to the

relative merits of each route; but, whilst they differed as to the best and easiest line of research, they one and all adhered to their advocacy of the search. Not one of them doubted its feasibility, whilst they all rejoiced at the prospect of thereby reviving a spirit of enterprise and adventure among our seamen. I state this from the chair advisedly, because a very different version of what really took place has appeared elsewhere. To-night, the respective advantages of these two projects have been again brought before you in two memoirs. In the first of these, Mr. Hickson, reasoning both upon astronomical and isothermal data, has contended that the watery region immediately around the North Pole must have a more tempered climate than the land-locked and intensely cold tracts in which Franklin was lost. Now, if the unscientific portion of the public can only be disabused of the prejudice it entertains, that the projected expedition is destined to go into a region of greater cold even than that in which Franklin's ships were beset, simply because it is further north, and can be made to understand that, on the contrary, whether the expedition goes by one route or the other, a more temperate climate will be met with near the Pole, as caused by a much greater breadth of water, then much of the opposition which has been raised in certain ill-informed quarters against this our geographical project will be dispelled. Irrespective of the astronomical cause mooted by Mr. Hickson, I beg, on my part, to support his belief, and that of Dr. Petermann, in the existence of a Polynia, or sea around the Pole, by the following considerations:—1st. The fact has been well ascertained by Parry, Scoresby, and other voyagers, that every portion of the floating pack-ice north of Spitzbergen is made up of frozen sea-water only, without a trace of those icebergs, carrying blocks of rock and terrestrial remains, which float down Baffin's Bay from the glaciers on the coast of Greenland. A still greater profusion of such icebergs, carrying erratic blocks of stone and much débris, crowd, as is well known, the Antarctic Sea, and are carried far northward from the South Pole, towards which lofty ice-clad mountains, rising to 13,000 feet above the sea, were proved to occur by Sir James Ross.* In the absence, therefore, of all such bergs and blocks to the north of Spitzbergen, Mr. Hickson has, I think, rationally inferred that the region around the North Pole must be mainly occupied by water. 2ndly. I would remind the Society that the northern shores of Siberia tell the same tale. For, in their vast expanse (*i. e.* about a moiety of the earth's circumference in those Arctic latitudes), the same absence of icebergs or erratic blocks, or of anything which can have been derived from great or lofty masses of land on the north, has been ascertained. The phenomenon, in short, is possibly the same as it is to the north of Spitzbergen. 3rdly. As a geologist, I beg to point out that this absence of erratic blocks in Northern Siberia has existed from that remote glacial period when much larger tracts of Northern Europe were occupied by glaciers than at the present day, and when far larger breadths of country were under the sea. Thus, I have myself followed the northern erratic blocks, which in that former time were transported in icebergs from Scandinavia and Lapland, and were lodged in their present positions (then a sea bottom), in Northern Germany and Russia. On the other hand, I no sooner crossed the Ural Mountains into Siberia, than in the very same parallels where such quantities of granitic and other erratic northern blocks abound in European Russia, not a vestige of them was to be seen. Other observers have extended this observation over the whole width of Siberia; and hence it is evident that, inasmuch as the northern part of that enormous region was submarine at the same period as Northern European Russia, so it follows that then, as now, no glacier-clad mountains existed at or near the North Pole; and that then, as now, a Polynia, whether open or

* See diagram sketches exhibited by Commander Davis.

frozen, must have existed there. 4thly. I beg to call attention to the striking phenomena brought to light by the observation of the celebrated Russian explorer Middendorf, as a decided proof that the cold is greatly moderated in advancing from Siberia towards the North Pole. In passing northwards over the vast masses of land which constitute the great region of Northern Siberia, and which are treeless and entirely sterile, he found, on reaching the Arctic Ocean, that the long promontory of Taimyr, which juts out for some distance towards the North Pole, flanked on either side by frozen sea, exhibited quite another aspect, and that fir-trees were even growing upon it, though nothing of the sort was in existence for enormous distances to the south. Now, as, for the reasons just given, there can be no great and lofty masses of land near the North Pole, so we see actually that where the water does largely prevail, the cold is actually much modified in the Polar Sea. We have only, therefore, to adopt the best plan for reaching the Polynia of this induction. In his Memoir, Mr. Markham has (true to his friend Sherard Osborn) set before you the very great advantages to be gained by adhering to the plan of that gallant officer; and that, by sledging along the west coast of Greenland, the true physical geography of that enormous snow-clad region will be determined, and that many important additions will be made to geology and natural history science, which cannot be expected to be met with on the more purely maritime expedition to the north of Spitzbergen. In these respects I entirely agree with our accomplished Secretary. I will not deign to contrast the feeble and irrelevant argument put forth by timid persons as to the danger to be incurred by Polar navigators, for surely the British Navy has not come to the condition that, with their present great means and appliances, they cannot emulate and surpass the efforts of Hudson and our earliest voyagers in their little cock-boats. If there were great danger to be encountered in this projected expedition, it would indeed be only an additional stimulus to our brave seamen; but, as a matter of fact, there have been many fewer losses of life in the Arctic or Antarctic Sea than in other quarters of the globe over which sailors are bound to roam. *Gentlemen, we are not here called upon to express our opinion as a body in favour of one or the other plan of reaching the North Pole. It will be for the Council of our own body, aided by the advice of the Councils of other Scientific Societies, so to put the case before the Admiralty and Her Majesty's Government, as to secure the fulfilment of a great geographical object by those means and by that route which our rulers may deem to be the most efficacious.*

The President then read the following extracts from a letter he had just received from Lady Franklin, dated Madrid, April 6th:—

“MY DEAR SIR RODERICK,—

“Although I have little doubt you know from some of our mutual friends that they have written to me on the subject of the Polar Expedition, yet I cannot leave it to them alone to tell you how very deeply I sympathise with the proposed effort, and how earnestly I wish it may be realised. For the credit and honour of England, the exploration of the North Pole should not be left to any other country. It is the birthright and just inheritance of those who have gone through fifteen years of toil and risk in Arctic seas. The glory that yet remains to be gathered should be theirs; and can there be any moment so fitting as the present? Those accomplished Arctic navigators who have done so much already, are still young in years and ardour, though old and wise as patriarchs, by dint of observation and experience. What future generation will see the like? Twenty years hence, or even ten, will you be sure to find a M'Clintock able and longing for the service, and some half score of officers resembling him, scarcely less anxious to join, besides a host of hardy seamen trained in Arctic seas, and to whom no other service can compete with it in attraction?